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Identical letters dated 13 January 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am writing the present letter to inform you of recent events related to the Hamas terrorist organization's ongoing practice of deliberately endangering civilians.

In the course of recent operations in the Gaza Strip, Israel has accumulated mounting evidence regarding Hamas's appalling use of civilians as human shields and of its launching of operations from civilian locations. Many weapons caches have been found in mosques, schools and homes; a military operations centre has been located under Gaza's largest hospital; and terrorists routinely fire from inside the houses of civilians who are held as hostages, prevented by Hamas from leaving. While Hamas's use of human shields is long-documented, the extent to which it has resorted to this deliberate practice in recent weeks is shocking, and the evidence for it is overwhelming and incontrovertible.

And now, faced with increasing pressure, Hamas has taken the ultimate cynical route: terrorists are increasingly booby-trapping civilian houses and other buildings in anticipation of the Israel Defense Forces. It does this with total disregard for the safety of Gaza's civilians.

I report these events and findings to you with urgency, since it is the civilians on both sides that suffer from Hamas's singular aim of destroying Israel and its people. I wish to assure you that Israel is taking all reasonable precautions under the circumstances to avoid civilian casualties. However, I must reiterate that it is Hamas that bears sole responsibility for the results of the current campaign. It is Hamas that unceasingly rains rockets down on Israel, and it is Hamas that deliberately endangers Gaza's civilians.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gabriela **Shalev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

09-20800 (E) 140109